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(From the Transactions of the Nova Scotian Institute of Science, Halifax, N. S., Ser. 2, Vol. 1.)

III.—NOTES ON NOVA SCOTIAN ZOOLOGY: NO. 3.—BY HARRY
PIERS, Assoc. Member A. O. U., Halifax, N. S.

(Read May 14th, 1894.)

Two series of these notes have already appeared in the Transactions of the Institute of Science. The present contribution, owing to the scarcity of unusual occurrences relating to other divisions of our zoology, is almost entirely confined to records of new or rare birds recently observed in the province. More than ten species are thus noted which were not mentioned in the late Mr. Andrew Downs's catalogue*, a few of which are also new to the ornithological fauna of the Dominion of Canada. Of course, most of these are stragglers from their regular habitats.

I have not been able to chronicle any item of great importance regarding the mammals of the province. As a consequence of their non-migratory habits, they are in one way less likely to present novel incidents for record than a class, such as the birds, which is composed of animals able to go at will from one region or country to another. On the other hand, the study of the habits of the former will still repay any labour devoted to it, for owing to their being thus confined as individuals to a limited range, they are more liable to the development of local characteristics than most of the latter animals, which are wanderers of cosmopolitan tendencies.

During the summer of 1892, I was at King's College, Windsor, Hants County, and thus had an opportunity of studying the natural history of that district, and the relative abundance of various species in the eastern and western parts of the province. One or two observations upon the subject have been inserted in the present paper. The faunal differences, however, did not appear to be as great as those relating to the flora of the two districts.

* "Catalogue of the Birds of Nova Scotia." *Trans. N. S. Inst. of Nat. Sc.*, vol. VII, pp. 142-178.

I wish to thank Messrs. Purcell and Egan, taxidermists of Halifax, for information regarding birds they have mounted, and for the liberty they have given me of inspecting their collections. To others, also, especially Mr. James McKinlay, of Pictou, N. S., I am much indebted for particulars relative to rare specimens.

MAMMALS.

BLACK RAT (*Mus rattus*). One of these animals was killed by a cat in Mr. S. Dawson's country house, Pictou, in October, 1887. It is now preserved in the museum of the Academy. The species is very rare in Nova Scotia, and Dr. J. Bernard Gilpin, at the time he prepared his papers on the mammalia of the province*, knew of only four instances of its occurrence. One specimen was mounted by Mr. A. Downs, two others were procured by himself, and the fourth was given to him by Mr. J. R. Willis. It has also been observed on the Pacific sea-board, but nowhere has it penetrated far into the interior.

BIRDS.

HOLBELL'S GREBE (*Colymbus holboellii*)*. A male was shot near Halifax, on 9th April, 1891. Another in full breeding-plumage was killed on 25th April, 1894. Both were mounted by Mr. Thomas J. Egan, of Halifax. In the spring, about five years ago, the same gentleman obtained a specimen of the immature bird—the only one he has ever noted. At this age, the species for many years was erroneously described by naturalists as the "Crested Grebe," owing to its resemblance to the British bird of that name.

HORNED GREBE (*Colymbus auritus*). Mr. Downs only knew of one instance of this bird having been taken in Nova Scotia. It may be as well to record that the specimen which he referred to, was one which had been set-up many years ago by Mr. Egan. Since then, the latter taxidermist purchased two, male and female, in full spring plumage, which were shot together at Lawrencetown, Halifax County, on 17th or 18th April, 1894. They were brought to Halifax on 21st April. Another, a male,

* *Trans. N. S. Inst. Nat. Sc.*, vol. II., pt. iv., p. 12.

was killed at the same place on 20th April, 1894. It is a rare bird in Nova Scotia, although, strange to say, Mr. Chamberlain (*Catalogue of Canadian Birds*) speaks of it as common throughout the Dominion, and breeding from about latitude 45 degrees northward.

IVORY GULL (*Gavia alba*). Mr. Egan has two specimens of this gull. The first was taken on 15th October, 1889, in the island of Cape Breton. The second, a male, was obtained at Chezzetcook, to the north-east of Halifax, on 26th October, 1892. This is an Arctic species which in winter comes south as far as Labrador and Newfoundland. Its occurrence in Nova Scotia, therefore, is probably merely accidental. Chamberlain (*Catalogue of Canadian Birds*) says that a few examples have straggled to the Bay of Fundy and to Lake Ontario. The species is noted as "rare" in the late Mr. Downs's Catalogue. Mr. J. M. Jones in his paper "On the Laride of the Nova Scotian Coast,"* says that only one specimen, as far as he was aware, had been observed on our coast. It had been seen by Capt. Wedderburn, 42nd Royal Highlanders, in Halifax Harbour some years before the time of writing.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*). In the *Ornithologist and Oologist* for August, 1890, page 122, Mr. F. A. Bates in his "Wanderings, No. 8," says, that while at The Narrows Harbour, Halifax County, with Mr. Egan, a shot fired at a gull brought it wounded to the flats, where its cries attracted a large flock, two of which were killed.† These two, he states, "subsequently proved to be probably Ring-bills (A. O. U. No. 54) in young plumage." "I am informed by friends in Halifax," he goes on to say, "that this is a somewhat unusual occurrence, and Mr. Downs, the veteran ornithologist of Nova Scotia, never saw it, and does not mention it in his list. This seems rather strange, as the bird is common on all sides of the Province. Mr. Harry Austen, of Halifax, who possesses one of the birds, writes me that the nearest point at which he knows of the bird is on the Canadian Lakes, and until further noted we must only

* *Trans. N. S. Inst. Nat. Sc.*, vol. II, pt. iv, 1870.

† This was during the latter part of September, 1889.

accept it as a probable addition to the list of the birds of Nova Scotia." Although Mr Downs had not personally observed the bird, and therefore did not include it in his catalogue, yet Mr. J. M. Jones mentioned it in his paper "On the Laridæ of Nova Scotia," before quoted, appending thereto the following equivocal note: "Although known on our coast, of the habits or distribution of this species we possess but meagre information. I am inclined to think that this is the species which I have observed keeping company with the steamer the whole way across the Atlantic." Mr. Ridgway in his *Manual of North American Birds* (p. 32) says that the species is found over the whole of North America, breeding far northward, and migrating south, in winter, to Cuba and Mexico. I think that there is no doubt that it occurs on the coast of Nova Scotia, but for some reason it has escaped the guns of our naturalists. Mr. Egan thinks that Mr. Bates's specimen was correctly identified.

LAUGHING GULL (*Larus atricilla*). Three specimens, all of which came from Devil's Island, at the entrance of Halifax Harbour, are in Mr. Egan's collection. Two of these were killed on 10th September, 1888. The third, a female, was obtained on 15th June, 1892. There is also a fourth specimen in the McCulloch collection, belonging to Dalhousie College, Halifax. This species was not included in the "Catalogue of the Birds of Nova Scotia." Its occurrence, however, was to be expected in the province, for Mr. Chamberlain had mentioned it as having occasionally been found in the Bay of Fundy.

CASPIAN TERN (*Sterna tschegrava*). In May, about eight years ago, Mr. F. Bell, of Dartmouth, obtained a specimen of this very rare bird, which had been killed at Cole Harbour, Halifax County. It now belongs to Mr. Egan, who also has another which was shot last year (1893). The late Mr. Downs, I understand, got one from Cole Harbour shortly after Mr. Bell's specimen was taken. The same man killed both.

BLACK TERN (*Hydrochelidon nigra surinamensis*). Mr. Egan informs me that he has two specimens, in immature plumage, which were killed at Devil's Island, Halifax Harbour, on 10th September, 1888. It is the only record for the province.

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus fuscus*). On 31st May, 1885, a Brown Pelican was seen to alight on a salt-water marsh at River John, Pictou, N. S., where it was approached without much difficulty and killed. Upon examination the body was found to be emaciated and the pouch entirely empty. The skin was mounted, and is now in the museum of Pictou Academy. It is in full nuptial plumage, and has a greenish black pouch. The latter was at first slightly shaded with green and blue, but it soon afterwards turned to its present colour. Mr. James McKinlay writes me that on 1st June, 1893, an adult male of the same species was shot on Pictou Island by Mr. J. Hogg, the lighthouse keeper. It was slightly larger than the first specimen, from which it did not differ materially either in form or colour. From tip of bill to end of tail, it measured 4 feet 7 inches; bill, $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches; tarsus, $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches. No food whatever was found in the stomach, and its flesh was in poor condition. It probably will be also placed in the Academy museum. On 19th August, 1889, my brothers, while on the shore of Bedford Basin, saw a bird which was probably a Pelican. They described its general colour as grayish, and it had a pouch beneath the bill. When observed, it was flying from the north-east to the south-west. The species must only be regarded as an accidental visitor. It is not mentioned at all in Mr. Chamberlain's *Catalogue of Canadian Birds*, the most recent general work upon the subject. Its habitat is the coasts and islands of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, including the West Indies; north, regularly, to North Carolina, accidentally (blown by storm?) to Illinois (Ridgway). I may as well mention that Mr. Chamberlain, speaking of another species, the American White Pelican (*P. erythrorhynchos*), says that "one specimen has been taken in Nova Scotia and two in New Brunswick." I know nothing of the Nova Scotian specimen referred to.

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*). This is a rare migrant in Nova Scotia, but it is common from Montreal to Western Manitoba, and Mr. McIlwraith (*Birds of Ontario*) reports it as one of the most abundant species which visit Lake Ontario. Mr. Harry

Austen, of Dartmouth, obtained a Nova Scotian specimen about the beginning of February, 1894.

KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*). On 4th April, 1894, a King Eider was brought to Halifax, which had been shot at Sambro, Halifax County, about 21st March. Another was brought from Lawrencetown, to the north-east of Halifax, on 7th April, 1894. It was quite fresh and had evidently been killed two or three days before. Both were mounted by Mr. Egan. Mr. F. Bell also has a specimen.

GREATER SNOW GOOSE (*Chen hyperborea nivalis*). According to Mr. James McKinlay, this species is seen at intervals in Pictou County early in the season, either in small numbers or else singly in company with the Canada Goose. An instance occurred in April, 1894, at Caribou Harbour, at which place geese are wont to congregate in large flocks during the vernal and autumnal migrations. It did not fly with the Canada Geese; and when it attempted to join them, it was driven back. Mr. McKinlay tells me that half a century ago the species was less uncommon in the county just mentioned, and on two occasions a small flock of five or six was observed. It was impossible, however, to approach within shooting distance of the birds, owing to their extreme wariness. They were rarely seen to alight, and only then on some long, bare sand beach or exposed salt-water marsh. Their colour apparently was pure white. Unfortunately none have yet been shot. Mr. Downs recorded several specimens in his catalogue, and there is also one, I understand, in the McCulloch collection, Dalhousie College Museum.

BRANT (*Branta bernicla*). A curious freak of nature is seen in a female Brant which Mr. Egan purchased on 9th April, 1894. It came from Amherst, N. S. In ordinary individuals the head, neck, body anteriorly, quills, and tail are black, and the back brownish-gray. The neck of the present one is not of the normal colour, but white; the head, bill, sides of breast, back, wings, tail, and legs, only being blackish. The dark colour of the head extends posteriorly as far as the occiput, whereas anteriorly it extends to the lowest part of the throat, or perhaps somewhat beyond. The eyes were of the ordinary colour. Mr.

McKinlay has since written to me that in April, 1894, a "white Brant" had been seen with a number of others of the normal colour. He had not heard of the specimen just noted.

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis autumnalis*). Mr. J. McKinlay reports that early in May, about twenty-seven years ago, while the weather still was cold, a farmer who lived near the head waters of the East River of Pictou, noticed two odd-looking birds on the margin of a grassy lake. With some difficulty he managed to get within gun-range, and fired, killing one and putting its companion to flight. They proved to belong to the above species, and had evidently wandered far from their southern habitat. Mr. Downs had one specimen of this bird taken in our province, and Mr. Thomas Brewer informed him that a flock passed through the New England States about the same time. This is the flock referred to in the "Catalogue of the Birds of Nova Scotia." In 1878, Mr. Frank L. Tileston saw several birds "undoubtedly of this species" in Prince Edward Island,* and Mr. Francis Bain speaks of it as an "occasional visitant" in that province.† The latter expression, however, does not sufficiently indicate its rareness, for it is merely an accidental straggler in the Dominion of Canada.

CLAPPER RAIL (*Rallus longirostris crepitans*). On 12th May, 1892, one of these birds was brought to Mr. W. A. Purcell, taxidermist of Halifax. It had been killed at Lawrencetown, Halifax County, probably a day or two before. In October, 1893, Mr. Egan also obtained a specimen which came from the same locality. These are the only ones they have ever noted in the province. The species is not included in Mr. Chamberlain's catalogue, nor can I find any other record of its occurrence in the Dominion. It is a regular visitor as far north as Long Island, and has been observed occasionally in Massachusetts. But one example, apparently, has been reported north of Boston; it was taken near Portland, Maine.‡

* Chamberlain, *Catalogue of Canadian Birds*, p. 31.

† *Birds of Prince Edward Island*, 1891, p. 69.

‡ Chamberlain's *Ornithology of U. S. and Canada*, based on *Nuttall's Manual*, 1891, p. 187.

- Ruff. This had also been Mr. Boardman's opinion, but he subsequently waived it to a slight extent, under the impression that the Smithsonian Institution must be correct in its determination. Many series of skins of the Ruff were examined, but no specimen agreed altogether with the example from Nova Scotia. I think the bird may prove to be a hybrid. When killed, its legs were *black*. The "ruff" is wanting. The following measurements were made by me from the mounted bird: length of wing, 6.60 ins.; middle tail-feather, 2.30; gape, 1.42; depth of bill at base .25; tarsus, 1.70; middle toe, with claw, 1.37. Considering the uncertainty connected with the identification of the specimen, its name is inserted here with a query. If it proves to be a Ruff, it is of course a straggler from the Eastern Hemis-

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~~GRAY GYRFALCON (*Falco rusticolus*)~~. An individual was killed at Porter's Lake, Halifax County, on 15th October, 1887. It was mounted by Mr. Egan, who says it is the only one he has ever seen. Mr. George A. Boardman, I understand, has two from the Bay of Fundy. The species is not in Mr. Downs's list. The four forms of the Gyr Falcon—the White, Gray, Black, and *F. rusticolus gyrfalco*—were separated by the American Ornithologists' Union. Very recent researches seem to show that this classification will ultimately have to be abandoned, and but one species recognized, with two or three geographical races.

DUCK HAWK (*Falco peregrinus anatum*). About the middle of September, 1892, two of these powerful and beautiful birds were shot on McNab's Island, Halifax Harbour, one being killed

now belongs to Mr. George Beaman of this city.

AMERICAN HAWK OWL (*Surnia ulula caparoch*). On 13th December, 1893, one of these very rare Nova Scotian owls was brought to Mr. Purcell. It came from Annapolis, and was quite fresh—probably having been killed a few days previously. Mr. Downs got one early in 1889. Mr. Austen has two.

PILEATED WOODPECKER (*Ceophloeus pileatus*). This handsome bird, the Great Northern Chief as it is sometimes called, will probably at length succumb to the advances of civilization. It is an uncommon or rare resident in the province, and is only found in heavily wooded districts. There is no record of its breeding near Halifax, nor have I ever heard of it even having been observed in that locality. A specimen was shown to me by Mr.

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~~with which it agrees.~~ There is a yellowish streak upon the throat, but not a white patch as is sometimes the case. The outer tail-feathers are devoid of white, showing that the specimen is a female. The wings are barred with yellowish red, and minutely sprinkled with brownish black. The exact length could not be ascertained with certainty, but is probably about eleven or twelve inches. Mr. McKinlay says "it may in all sincerity be pronounced a bona-fide Chuck-will's-widow." It was reported, he says, that the cries of the species had been heard at certain times, but such, he continues, has not been properly substantiated. At first I was very doubtful about inserting the species in my notes, for it seemed more probable that the specimen was a Whippoorwill, whose upper parts are somewhat similar in colour; later information, however,—especially

BOBOLINK (*Dotichonyx oryzivorus*). The very great abundance of Bobolinks in the western part of the province is a noticeable contrast to the present rarity, or rather absence, of these birds about Halifax. They are without doubt the most conspicuous objects in the ornithological fauna of the flat stretches of dyked land from Windsor westward. When coming from Halifax, the first of these rollicking songsters is met in the vicinity of the St. Croix River, Mr. W. Bishop, formerly of Kentville, informs me that the males arrive in the province between the 15th and 19th of May, and the females about a week later. The first I noted in 1892, were two males on the 18th May. All leave the province between the 5th and the 20th of September. On 18th June, 1890, I heard a single bird singing its unmistakable ditty in a wood not far from my home in Halifax. It was

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About 15th October, 1893, Mr. Purcell obtained two of these birds which had been shot near Beech Hill, about five miles from Halifax, on the St. Margaret's Bay Road; and about 10th November of the same year, he obtained another from the Sambro Road. Mr. Egan has had about three specimens. Mr. Chamberlain says it is "an abundant summer resident from the Maritime Provinces to the Great Plains." As regards Nova Scotia, I think its rarity does not warrant such a statement.

SCARLET TANNAGER (*Piranga erythromelas*). In the spring of about 1873, when raw, chilly winds prevailed, considerable numbers of Scarlet Tannagers appeared in various parts of Pictou County. Such as were taken, were found to be in an emaciated condition, and some were even picked up dead, evidently overcome by cold and hunger. Mr. J. McKinlay, who informed me

BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*Ampelis garrulus*). On 16th November, 1893, a male was shot at Porter's Lake, Halifax County. It was mounted by Mr. Egan. This is only the second record of the occurrence of the bird in Nova Scotia. A flock of about a dozen visited us in the winter of 1864-5 (*vide* Downs's Catalogue).

MOCKING BIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*). On the afternoon of Sunday, 30th June, 1889, Mr. Charles A. McLennan, of Truro, N. S., saw a bird on the "interval" at the back of that town, which, from his acquaintance with the species in Virginia, he recognized as a Mocking Bird. He followed it during the whole afternoon. At length, in the dusk of the evening, it retired into

*Catalogue of Canadian Birds, p. 98.

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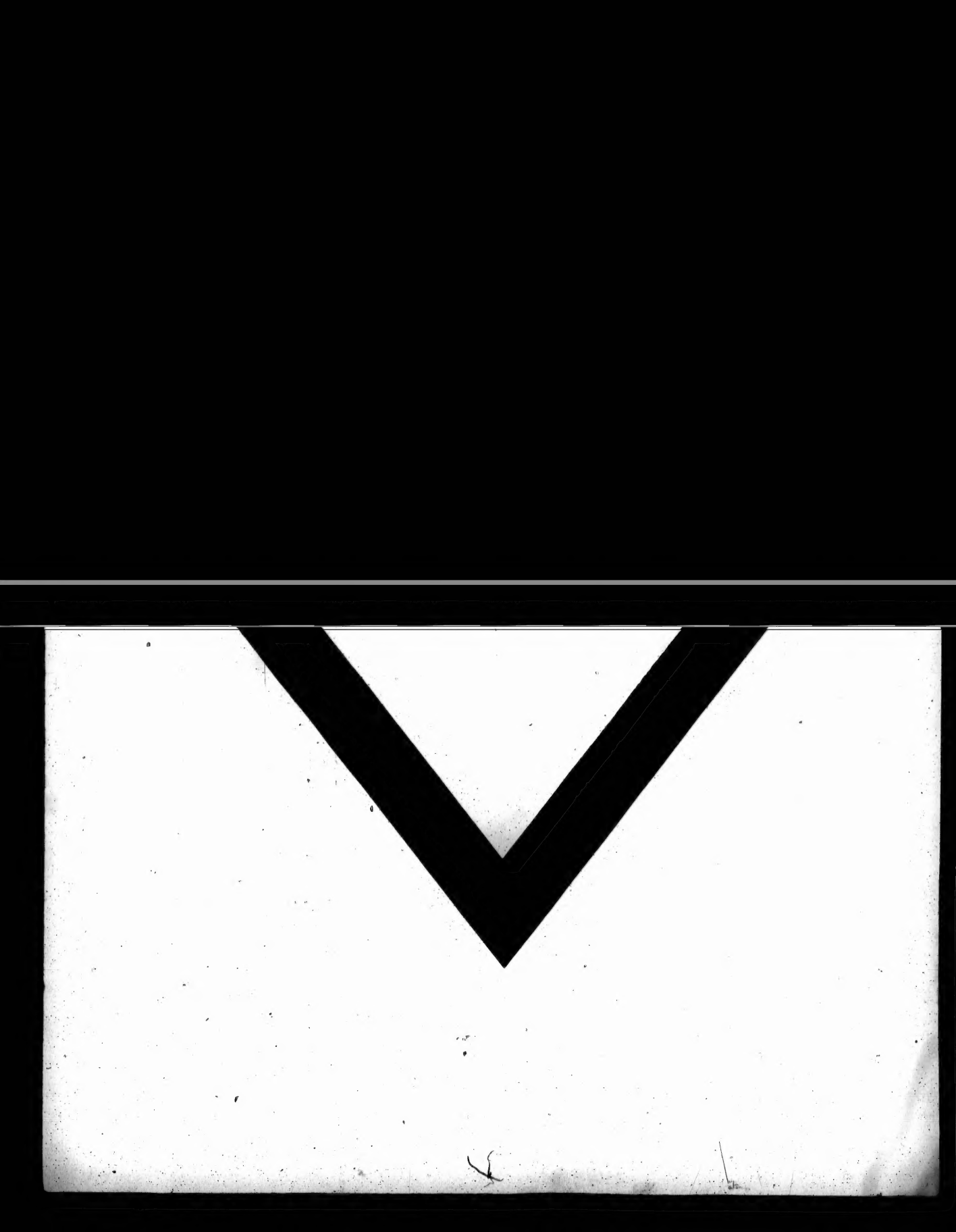
boured Mr. McLennan examined it particularly and with an expert's eye, in order to ascertain if such had been the case. "I am convinced," he writes to me, "that it was *not* an escaped cage-bird—in fact, I know it as certainly as I can know anything. Its plumage was unchafed, and its feet were perfectly clean and not perch-marked. All birds which have been caged for the shortest time, have the plumage rubbed on the outer feathers of the wings and the ends of the tail-feathers, and the feet also show very plainly the effects of confinement. To one accustomed to handling birds, I do not think a mistake is possible, and I have had as many as eighty birds caged at one time." He tells me that he now feels he made a great mis-

*Chamberlain's *Catalogue of Canadian Birds*; Mottswaith's *Birds of Ontario*.

and permitted me to observe them very closely. It was probably the mating season. I had never before seen such great quantities of the insects, and they were still numerous when I left Windsor at the end of September.

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